

METHODS 2: NOTES, PHOTOGRAPHS, VIDEO, AUDIO

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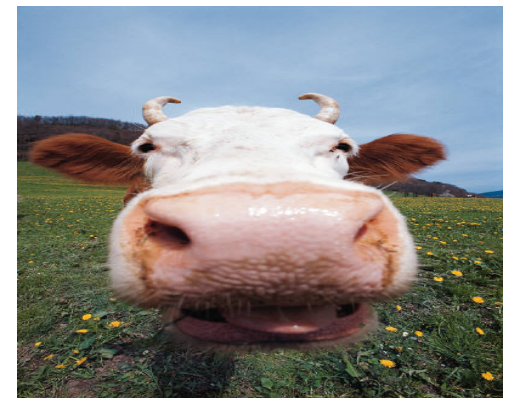
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FEEDBACK OBSERVATION I

- Drawing of the site (memory; has anything changed since last time?; is somebody/something present in drawing, which you haven't paid attention to and which have an effect on your observations?; visual map for the readers)
- Setting the stage: where are we, weather, time of day, location, who is present?
- Explain in what way the setting is interesting for observation
- What do your observations tell?
- Organizing principles. What patterns do you see, deviations?
- Would it have been helpful to document the time when you began and ended observing? What would such take reveal? (log time; different events/people/routines might be different at different times)



NOTE TAKING

- Used both within interview and observation
- Keep a field diary
- Jot down what you observe / encounter / hear / smell / engage in / non-verbal communication / tone of voice / etc. Remember to note: date, time, place, persons present (roles, occupation, affiliation). Video, photos, tape recordings serve as good memorabilia, but remember to 'log' them (Blomberg et al. 1993). Also, if you use a tape recorder and non-verbal communication happens (e.g. pointing at something, shaking head) make sure to take notes (Crang & Cook 2007; Madden 2010).

TYPES OF FIELD NOTES

- Participatory notes (scratch notes)
- Consolidated notes
- Diary, log

Back-up, copy, safe

(Madden 2010)

FIELD NOTES are notes you:

- jot down of impressions in the field while (participant-)observing, listening in, talking, asking, doing (“**scratch notes**” Sanjek 1990).
- take when you engage in direct conversations about a topic (interview) and write answers down verbatim away from ongoing activities (**notes of “transcription”**, Clifford 1990) – (e.g. what artifact is this, answer, what do you call it, answer, what do you use it for, answer, when, answer, how is it different from x artifact you use, answer, when do you use it, answer, do others use it, answer, for the same purpose as you, answer, etc.)
- make when you write up your impressions or ‘verbatim’ and make “a more or less coherent representation of an observed cultural reality. While still piecemeal and rough, such field descriptions are designed to serve as a data base for later writing an interpretation aimed at the production of a finished account. [...] it involves [...] a turning *away* from dialogue and observation toward a separate place of writing, a place for reflection, analysis, and interpretation.” (Ibid:51-52, original italic). (these notes are “**descriptive notes**” Ibid.)
- write down (each day) after your empirical study – reflections, questions to ask, your reaction, etc. (these notes are “**fieldnote records**” Sanjek 1990).

PHOTOGRAPHS

- Take down observation “scratch notes” (so you know what’s on/behind/outside the photos)
- Photos as documentation (complementing fieldnotes, memory, also in terms of what used to appear strange)
- Strategy using photos: who takes the photos (researcher, researched?)
- Photos as auto-photography (see also cultural probes)
- Photos as way of prompt reflections / memories

PHOTOGRAPHS

- Photos can contextualize (visual documentation) and connect the viewer to the argument (vis-à-vis text)
- Photos can be helpful in studies on social change
- Photos as material objects (part of living)
- Analyzing still/moving pictures (notes/transcripts, patterns, symbols, who, how, what)

VIDEO

Much of what goes for photos goes for video, but pay notice to....

- Think about: framing, focus, distance, angle, point of view, shot duration, tracking, cutting, continuity between shots
- Video can be transcribed into text and analyzed as such (but it depends on what you want to do – do you want to hand in a written thesis, an appendix with a movie, a movie) – see e.g. Suchman & Trigg (1991) for example of transcribed video
- If you choose to transcribe, remember descriptions of setting, persons present, interactions, etc. as when you do observation/interviews.
- Always take down observation “scratch notes” when you film
- What kind of equipment (software) do you have to edit video? – what about hardware? – do you have the expertise to use editing software or do you know somebody who can help you?
- What do you want to use the video for?
- Time consuming
- Seek informed consent and preserve subject anonymity

AUDIO

Much of what goes for photos and video, goes for audio recordings (see also lecture notes on interview/observation), but pay notice to....

- Make sure your equipment works and that voices can be heard on the recording
- Take down observation “scratch notes”
- Transcribing is time consuming, so if you do not have a lot of free time:
- Write up / sum up – include examples by quoting
- Organize the interview by themes or topics
- A suggestion could be to use time as indicator if you’re not transcribing everything (e.g. something you might consider irrelevant at the moment (5.53 - 7.07 -> previous similar job)) and add a short sentence to indicate what has been ‘cut out’ from the transcript (see also Suchman & Trigg)
- Non verbal aspects can be noted during the interview
- Seek informed consent and subject anonymity

Issues to consider

- To imagine that behavioral patterns become visible and self-explanatory in a videotape is analogous to believing that a photograph reveals the diagnosis of a patient's illness. [...] the expertise is in the mind and technique of the analyst, not in the recording itself. [Conducting field work is a matter of] "selectivity and interpretation that go into the process of gathering careful ethnographic [material], writing useful fieldnotes [...], and analyzing the [material] in an appropriate and systematic way." (Forsythe 1999:132-133).
- "Recent critical work has [...] highlighted three problematic issues regarding the 'reality' of photography, film, video and other visual media: First, photography can never show unmediated reality. Second, still and moving pictures are often bound into existing discourses. Third, such photographs were also used to help 'reconstruct' visions of the other (Crag & Cook 2007:105-106).
- Ethical aspects – seek informed consent and subject anonymity – research sensitivity: do not take photos if they violate norms or feelings.

GROUP WORK

From Madden 2010

- Question 4 on page 135
- Assignment 1 on page 113